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SUBJECT: NIGERIA: MOD DANJUMA SAYS PDP WILL HANDLE BUHARI PROBLEM

CLASSIFIED BY AMBASSADOR HOWARD F. JETER. REASONS 1.5 (B) AND (D).

11. (C) SUMMARY: During a hurried April 24 meeting, Minister of Defense T.Y. Danjuma and Ambassador Jeter discussed the fallout of the April 19 Presidential and Gubernatorial elections and April 12 National Assembly elections. Danjuma expressed concern about ANPP Presidential candidate Mohammadu Buhari's refusal to concede defeat; however, he did not take Buhari's threat to use "mass action" to grind Nigeria to a halt seriously. Danjuma said that some of the just elected ANPP governors were not with Buhari and President Obasanjo's PDP would be reaching out to them and other Buhari supporters in the next few days. While Danjuma was unsure of the composition of the next Obasanjo government, he thought the President would offer positions to opposition party members as he did after the 1999 elections. END SUMMARY.

12. (C) During a hurried April 24 meeting, Minister of Defense Gen. (ret.) Theophilis Y. Danjuma and Ambassador Jeter discussed the fallout from the Presidential and Gubernatorial elections. Danjuma, ill with malaria and the flu, said while he was concerned about ANPP Presidential candidate and former military Head of State Maj. Gen. (ret.) Mohammadu Buhari's refusal to concede defeat to PDP President Olusegun Obasanjo, the GON would be able to "deal with" Buhari. Commenting that he remembered Buhari's inflexibility from the days when he was the would-be President's commanding officer, Danjuma said he did not expect Buhari to back down. Nevertheless, the MOD was confident the PDP would weather Buhari's criticisms and threats. Danjuma said most of the recently elected and re-elected ANPP governors, eager to remain in their seats, were unwilling to support Buhari's call for new elections. The President and the President's men planned to reach out to the governors and other prominent opposition party members. Danjuma predicted some would withdraw their support for Buhari in the next few days. Danjuma dismissed the idea that "mass action" by Buhari partisans could bring parts of Nigeria to a stand still. Referring to the ANPP strongholds in the North, Danjuma said the areas Buhari controlled were inconsequential to Nigeria's economy.

13. (C) Danjuma conceded the elections were less than perfect and serious problems were evident in the South-South. However, he called on Buhari to present enough evidence to warrant a new election. Further, Danjuma said Buhari had no right to cry foul since the ANPP was guilty of electoral malfeasance as well.

14. (C) When asked if the PDP would make concessions to opposition party members, Danjuma said he was not a member of the PDP (or any other party) and, therefore, did not know. However, he opined that since Obasanjo formed a "National Government" that included opposition party members after the 1999 election, the President would probably do the same now in the interest of national unity.

COMMENT

15. (C) Danjuma's prediction that Buhari will not back down is probably accurate. However, if the PDP can succeed in luring away Buhari's supporters, Obasanjo might be able to pull the rug out from under the would-be President, leaving him without the support of other ANPP stalwarts and other opposition politicians. Buhari's ability to influence public opinion and action would be greatly diminished.

16. (C) However, the PDP is unlikely to find the task of turning Buhari's supporters an easy one. Buhari's strong

public support in the North and negative international and domestic criticism of the Nigerian elections may strengthen the resolve of other ANPP flag bearers. Whether the PDP is successful in this venture should play out over the next week. END COMMENT.
JETER